



TWO RIVERS-OTTAUQUECHEE

William B. Emmons, III, Chairman
Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director

REGIONAL COMMISSION

Kari Dolan, Manager, Ecosystem Restoration Program
Department of Environmental Conservation, Watershed Management Division
1 National Life Drive, Main 2
Montpelier, VT 05620-3522

RE: Comments on the draft Water Quality Remediation, Implementation and Funding Report

Dear Ms. Dolan,

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the draft of the Water Quality Remediation, Implementation, and Funding Report envisaged by Act 138.

Our organization is an association of thirty municipalities in east-central Vermont. We provide technical services and assistance to local, state and federal levels of government, as well as to various organizations and businesses throughout the region. The two primary goals of our organization are to advocate for the needs of our member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life.

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission commends the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation for the time and effort that has been dedicated to preparing the Draft Report.

We provide the following comments on the Draft Report:

We are in strong support of the discussion of Regional Planning Commissions in the Draft Report and the roles RPCs can play in improving the state's water quality.

The Draft Report does a good job of highlighting the variety of ways RPCs can assist in protecting and improving water quality, including reviewing town plans for compliance with state statutes, providing technical assistance, and assisting in trainings and workshops, among others. As alluded to in the Report, many of these duties are already performed by RPCs on other topics, and transitioning to water-quality topics would be relatively simple.

In many instances, RPC staff have experience in water quality-related matters. For example, RPC staff may assist staff from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in river basin planning or in water management typing (if typing remains a statutory requirement). Additionally, within the last two months, Two Rivers RC staff helped two towns in our region complete a Better Back Roads culvert and road inventory project. These projects documented a large number of water quality problems and identified programs to address them.

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Lastly, we support amending 24 V.S.A. 4348a to include a required water quality element in regional plans. This would also enhance our ability to assist towns within our region to adequately consider water quality in their town plans.

It is a good suggestion that a statewide stormwater utility could offer assistance to municipalities in developing their own municipally owned local stormwater utility.

Developing a local stormwater utility may seem like a daunting task for a municipality, especially small municipalities—and there is no shortage of them in Vermont. Even municipalities that want to develop a utility may be hesitant due to a lack of knowledge of the process. Having a source of knowledge and assistance could help promote the development of utilities in large and small municipalities across the state.

The easier it is for a municipality to develop and institute a stormwater utility, the greater the chance that a utility will be developed. In addition, developing and implementing a successful utility in one municipality may encourage other surrounding municipalities to do the same. New England may generally lack stormwater utilities, but many stormwater utilities have been developed and implemented throughout the rest of the United States, most notably in Florida and Minnesota¹.

The section(s) of the Draft Report that discusses the aging drinking water and sewer systems in Vermont are well done.

We commend the DEC for bringing this issue to the forefront of improving Vermont's water quality. The aging and deterioration of drinking water and sewer infrastructure in Vermont and around the country is a major concern for human health safety, and for attaining clean water. Despite the importance of this infrastructure and the significance of the problem, sometimes it seems like aging drinking water systems are overlooked in discussions of environmental and human health.

This issue is compounded in Vermont due to the lack of funding water systems receive, and the dependence on these systems to encourage and facilitate growth within town centers. Not only does updating or installing water and sewer infrastructure provide environmental, human health and economic benefits², but it would also benefit state and regional land use laws by allowing dense development in the town center. Targeted, new investments in these locations would support initiatives advanced by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

¹ Warren Campbell, Western Kentucky University Stormwater Utility Survey, 2-3 (June 2012).
<http://www.wku.edu/engineering/documents/swusurveys/swsurvey-2012.pdf>

² State of Vt, Agency of Natural Resources, Water Quality Remediation, Implementation, and Funding Rep. (draft), at 48 (December 2012).

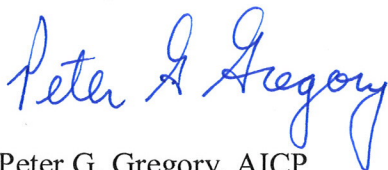
We found some grammatical errors while reading over the Draft Report.

- On the bottom of page 21, in the last full sentence, the text reads, “These *finding* are consistent...” We believe you intended to write “these *findings*.”
- In the “Agricultural Land” section on page 25, the sentence reads: “Targeting water quality management practices at these critical source areas *could close* to three times more effective in reducing phosphorus loading than targeting efforts randomly.” It seems as though this was intended: “Targeting... at these critical source areas *could be close* to three times more effective...”
- The last sentence on page 51 reads “However, *a variable fee structures* may be deemed the fairest approach...” To agree with the sentence as written, “*structures*” should be made singular.
- In the third paragraph under section D.1.2, the sentence reads: “This allows for the creation of a fee structure *without needed to collect* parcel specific information...” We believe “*needing*” was intended here instead of “*needed*.”

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on the draft of the Water Quality Remediation, Implementation, and Funding Report. We look forward to collaborating with Vermont DEC on this and other initiatives going forward.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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